

**Environmental Resources Committee
October 26, 2016
Minutes**

ERC Members Present: Neil Gilbert, Jan Harris, Richard Hilderman

Town Employees Present: Susan Parker

Council Members Present: Mark Benton, Rich Cerrato, Pete Larkin

Public Present: Tyler Newman, President and CEO, Business Alliance for a Sound Economy; Sandy Payne, Lloyd Fleming, Greg Jensen, Cynthia Anderson, Veronica White, Karen Joseph, Carmel Zetts, Ruth Reynolds, Katie Hovermale, Shirley Owen, Mr.

1. Meeting was called to order by Richard Hilderman, Chair
2. No Public Comments
3. Minutes approved
4. A. Members received a report from Susan Parker that the Power Point Presentation on the Shoreline Management and Dredging Proposal was now posted on the Town website.
4. B. Jan Harris reported that The Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines at Western Carolina, Dr. Rob Young, and Andy Coburn, had been asked by the ERC to critique the ERC's Power Point Presentation. Harris recommended that the Critique should be made part of the minutes and also be attached to the Power Point Presentation that is on the Town's website. Harris read the following excerpts from the Critique:

"Generally speaking, the negative environmental impacts of dredging a natural (previously un-dredged) channel are usually more significant - in terms of degree, extent and intensity - than those resulting from maintenance dredging (although maintenance dredging can result in significant negative environmental impacts, as well)."

"...it is reasonable to support (not vigorously challenge) the ongoing maintenance dredging of previously dredged channels (assuming best management practices and all permits are obtained) but advise against dredging previously un-dredged channels - such as N. Jinks Creek - due to the potential for significant environmental impacts, even in consideration of the limited economic/recreational benefits that might result."

"In terms of dredging the north end of Jinks Creek, it will almost certainly have a negative impact on estuarine resources and habitats. For example, sedimentation issues associated with the actual dredging process may impact shellfish resources and

SAV, while the secondary and long-term cumulative impacts on intertidal ecosystems resulting from an increase in the number, size and speed of boats utilizing this area must also be assessed....."

"Based on what is presented in the PowerPoint Presentation, we agree that there are a number of valid concerns associated with dredging the north end of Jinks Creek, and believe the economic/recreational benefits of so doing will not justify the potential risk of environmental degradation."

"Deepening a natural channel by several feet, as proposed, will likely not result in any habitat benefits/improvements."

Harris stated that because there had been some controversy over the boat photo in the Power Point Presentation, she had done some research on boats and water levels. She had talked with watermen at Calabash who said that a shrimp boat could navigate in 6 feet of water. She also talked with a Marina who described some boats that could travel in certain waters. Citing the following: A skip boat can travel in 6 " of water as well as a bay boat and a John boat. A Bayliner needs 18" of water, a Bay boat needs 11-12 inches of water, that 6 feet of water is a lot of water. Can't get a cruise ship in 6 feet of water but that it is a lot of water.

Harris suggested that the Committee change Question No. 1 of the Questions for Moffatt and Nichol to ask "What types of boats can travel in the depth of water to which Jinks Creek will be dredged.

Harris suggested and the Committee agreed that the Critique of the Power Point Presentation be made a part of the minutes and that it also be made a part of the Power Point Presentation and placed on the town website.

Comment from the public, Katie Hovermale stated that if she were on Council, she would welcome information like this in order to make an informed decision.

Committee agreed to ask to have the Critique made a part of the Power Point Presentation and placed on the Town website.

5. Cape Side Stormwater follow up. Neil Gilbert in an earlier meeting had presented a problem at Cape Side where a property was ordered to plant trees to provide an infiltration system for stormwater had been bushhogged taking down all the trees that were required to be planted. This was a result of another lot that had filled 404 wetlands illegally. Now the mitigation of that illegal filling had been removed. Susan Parker stated that the State is looking into it but she does not know the results at this time.

6. Richard Hilderman informed the committee that he and Jan Harris had had a phone conversation with Dr. Paul Gayes, Scientist with Coastal Carolina, SC as a result of a question coming from the public as to how the dredging would affect the eastern tip of Sunset Beach. Hilderman asked Harris to recount the points of that conversation of Oct. 5, 2016. They are as follows:

Inlets are dynamic and complex

- Dredging Jinks Creek may improve water circulation.
- The AIWW is badly shoaled behind OIB
- Dr. Gayes is more worried about the houses on the west end of Ocean Isle Beach. Tubbs inlet pressure and channel has (for decades) consistently been moving to the east. Inlets typically wag back and forth but that is not the case with Tubbs Inlet.
- Dredging Jinks Creek deeper would increase water velocity but would not change the channel (Tubbs Inlet Channel). He believes the channel will continue on an eastward path closer to OIB and will put more pressure on the west end of OIB.
- A hurricane could change the water dynamics such that the channel could cut through the spit of sand now called Palm Cove on the east end of Sunset Beach.
- Dredging Jinks Creek will not change the channel alignment of Tubbs inlet location next to Ocean Isle Beach.
- With dredging, there is a risk of degradation of the adjacent Primary Nursery Area.
- Dredging Tubbs Inlet would line up Jinks Creek with the inlet. This was done for Mason Inlet at Shell Island (Wrightsville Beach, New Hanover County) years ago.
- Dredging causes the overall change in dynamics of creeks and inlets and ends up with unintended consequences.

Councilman Pete Larkin was concerned that the Committee was talking about dredging Tubbs Inlet as that is not part of the project. Committee response was that both Mason Inlet, New Hanover County and Oak Island, Eastern Channel are mentioned on the FAQ sheet as comparable projects as the Sunset Beach Shoreline Management and Dredging Project.

There was much discussion among the Committee and the Public in attendance on the Mason Inlet move and Shell Island, Wrightsville Beach, NC.

7. Coastal Resource Commission Meetings; The Committee agreed that attendance at the Coastal Resources Commission meetings will be helpful to Committee Members and efforts should be made to attend those meetings. The next meeting is the end of November in Atlantic Beach. Richard Hilderman plans to attend. Jan Harris may attend.

8. Bird Island Local Advisory Committee: Jan Harris reported that she had spoken with Hope Sutton, Bird Island Conservation Reserve Director, to see if the ERC could hold a seat on that committee. Hope Sutton replied that the Town of Sunset Beach already had a seat on that committee but that no one was attending. The Committee agreed to ask Susan Parker if an ERC member could be placed in that seat.

10. Public Comments: Ruth Reynolds stated that she felt it would be good if the ERC members could take turns attending the Coastal Resources Committee meetings which would be a good learning experience for the committee members.

11. Meeting adjourned.